

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. **(currently amended):** ~~An equol-producing lactic acid bacteria containing A~~
composition comprising, as an essential component thereof, a biologically pure culture of a lactic acid bacterial strain belonging to the genus *Lactococcus* and wherein the bacterial strain
has~~having~~ an ability to utilize at least one daidzein compound selected from the group consisting of daidzein glycosides, daidzein, and dihydrodaidzein to produce equol.
2. **(original):** The composition according to Claim 1, wherein said lactic acid bacterial strain belonging to the genus *Lactococcus* is *Lactococcus garvieae*.
3. **(currently amended):** The composition according to Claim 2, wherein said lactic acid bacterial strain belonging to *Lactococcus* is *Lactococcus garvieae* 20-92 deposited under FERM BP-10036.
4. **(original):** The composition according to Claim 1 further comprising at least one member selected from the group consisting of daidzein compounds and daidzein compound-containing ingredients.
5. **(original):** The composition according to Claim 4, wherein the daidzein compound-containing ingredient is soybean flour or soy milk.

6. **(original):** The composition according to Claim 4 which is in the form of a beverage or a milk product.

7. **(original):** The composition according to Claim 4 further comprising equol.

8. **(original):** The composition according to Claim 7 which is in the form of a fermentation product of soy milk.

9. **(withdrawn-currently amended):** A method of producing equol comprising the step of letting a biologically pure culture of lactic acid bacterial strain belonging to the genus *Lactococcus*, wherein the bacterial strain has having an ability to utilize a daidzein compound to produce equol, act on at least one member selected from the group consisting of daidzein compounds and daidzein compound-containing ingredients.

10. **(withdrawn):** The method according to Claim 9, wherein said lactic acid bacterial strain belonging to the genus *Lactococcus* is *Lactococcus garvieae*.

11. **(withdrawn-currently amended):** The method according to Claim 10 wherein said lactic acid bacterial strain belonging to the genus *Lactococcus* is *Lactococcus garvieae* 20-92 deposited under FERM BP-10036.

12. (withdrawn): The method according to Claim 9, wherein the daidzein compound-containing ingredient is soybean flour or soy milk.

13. (original): A lactic acid bacterial strain belonging to the genus *Lactococcus* as deposited under FERM BP-10036.